

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a green hoodie and white earbuds, is sitting at a wooden desk. She is looking at a laptop screen that displays a video conference with several participants. Her right hand is holding a red pencil over an open book. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a library or study area.

# How are UK higher education students' experiencing learning online?

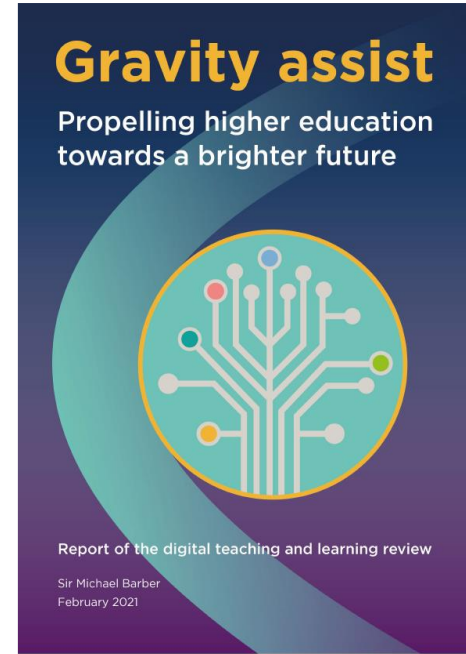
Sarah Knight, Head of learning and teaching transformation, Jisc

# Listening to our students...

## Recommendations from the Office for Students report, 'Gravity assist: propelling higher education to a brighter future'

- Co-design digital teaching and learning with students at every point in the design process
- Involve students and staff in decisions about the digital infrastructure that will be used and how it will be implemented
- Ensure a strong student voice informs every aspect of strategic planning

Available from <https://bit.ly/3eQtdtB>

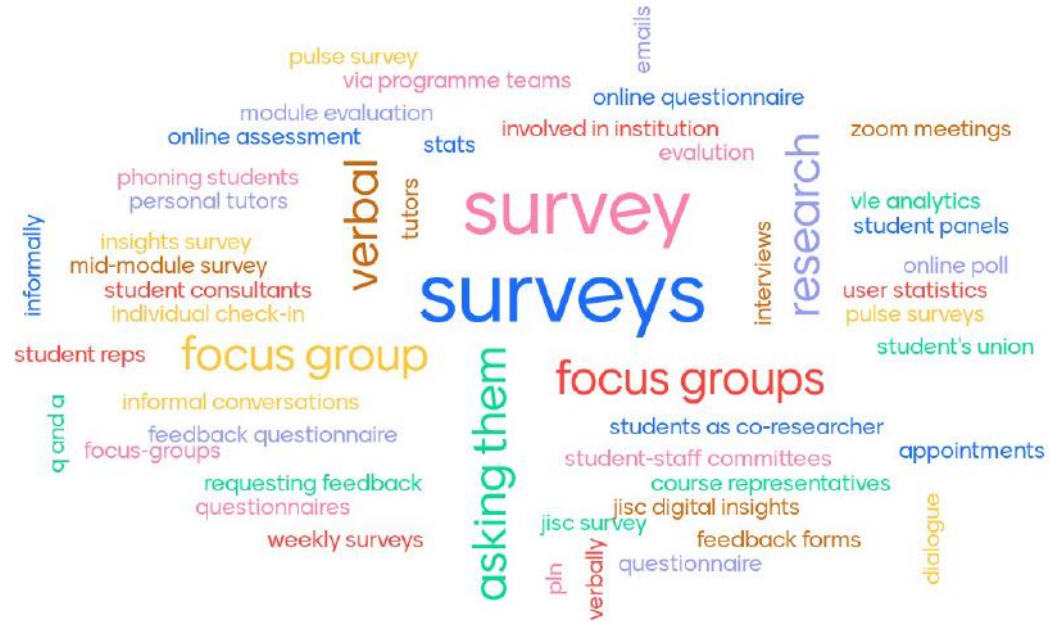


# How are you gathering experiences of your students' online learning?

- Visit [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)
- Enter the code: **4906 5818**
- Share your approaches in the word cloud



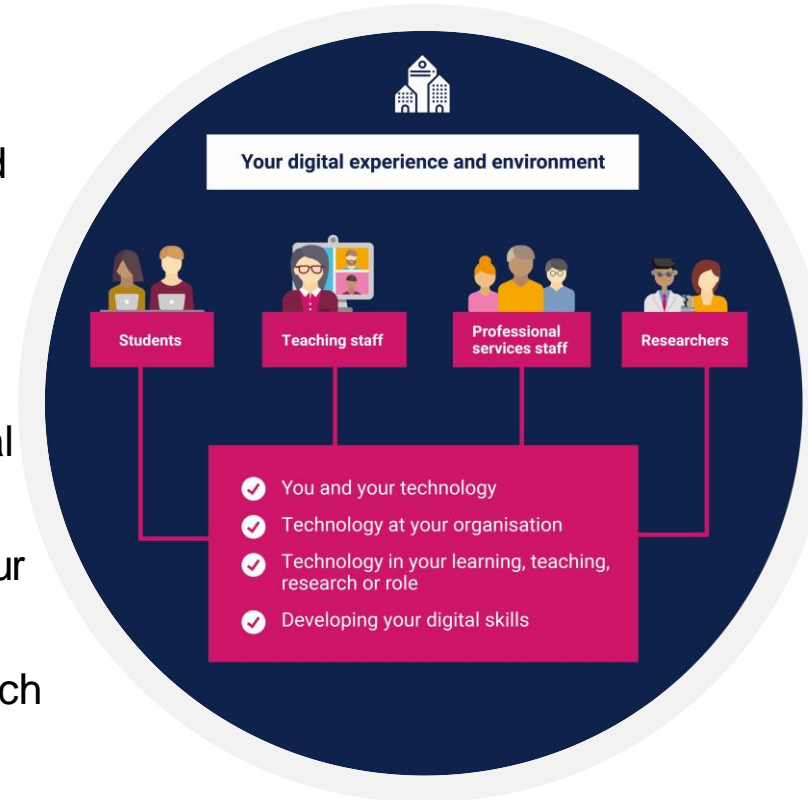
# How are you gathering your students' experiences of online learning?



# Digital experience insights

<https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk>

- Our insights surveys provide powerful data on how students, teaching and professional services staff, and researchers, are using technology
- Over 300,000 students and staff from over 250 organisations across FE and HE have participated in our surveys since 2016
- Designed to help to understand and improve the digital experience in FE and HE
- Provide baseline and benchmarking data to inform your digital strategy
- 62,700 student responses to our 2020-21 surveys which focused on the COVID context



# Students' digital experience and environment

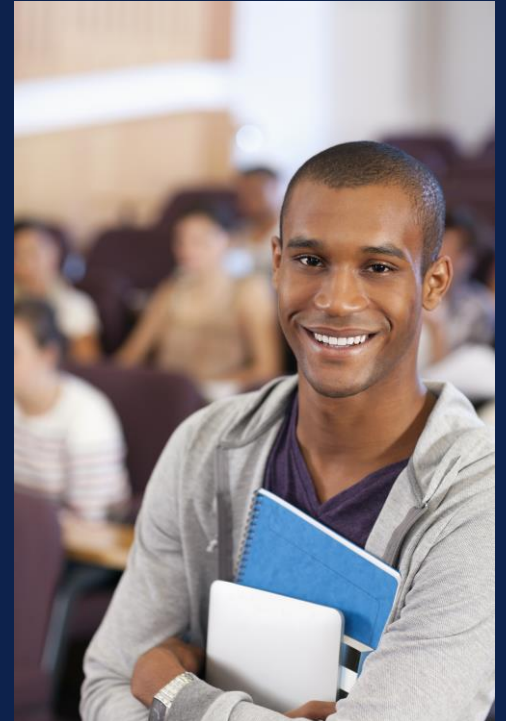
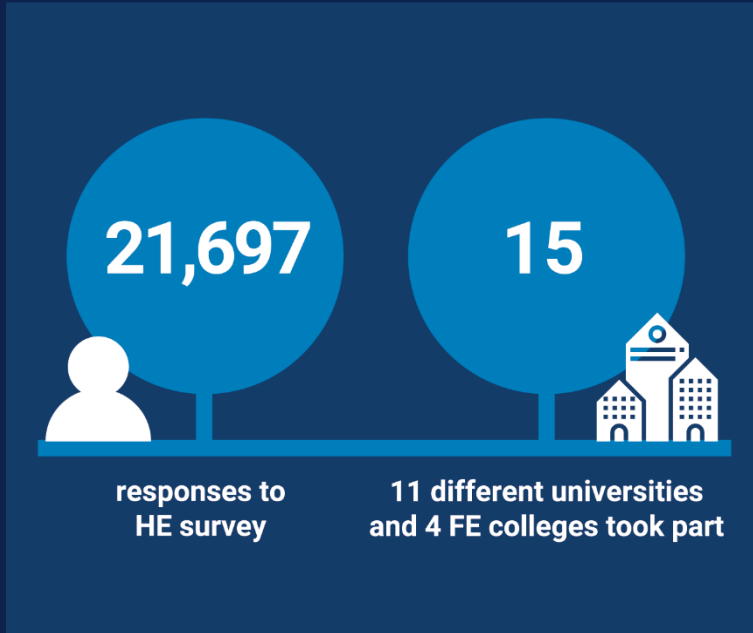
- You and your technology
- Technology at your university or college
- Technology in your learning (or teaching, research or role)
- Developing your digital skills

<https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/what-is-digital-insights-experience/>



# Listening to our HE students' voice (Oct – Dec 2020)

<https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8318/1/DEI-P1-HE-student-briefing-2021-FINAL.pdf>



# Theme one – your current learning situation for HE

In the last 2 weeks how have you mainly been learning?  
(answered between Oct-Dec 2020)

- **1%** – physically on site
- **18%** – a mix of physically on site and online learning
- **81%** – online learning (with the other students on course/shielding/quarantine)



# Theme one - Where were HE students learning online?

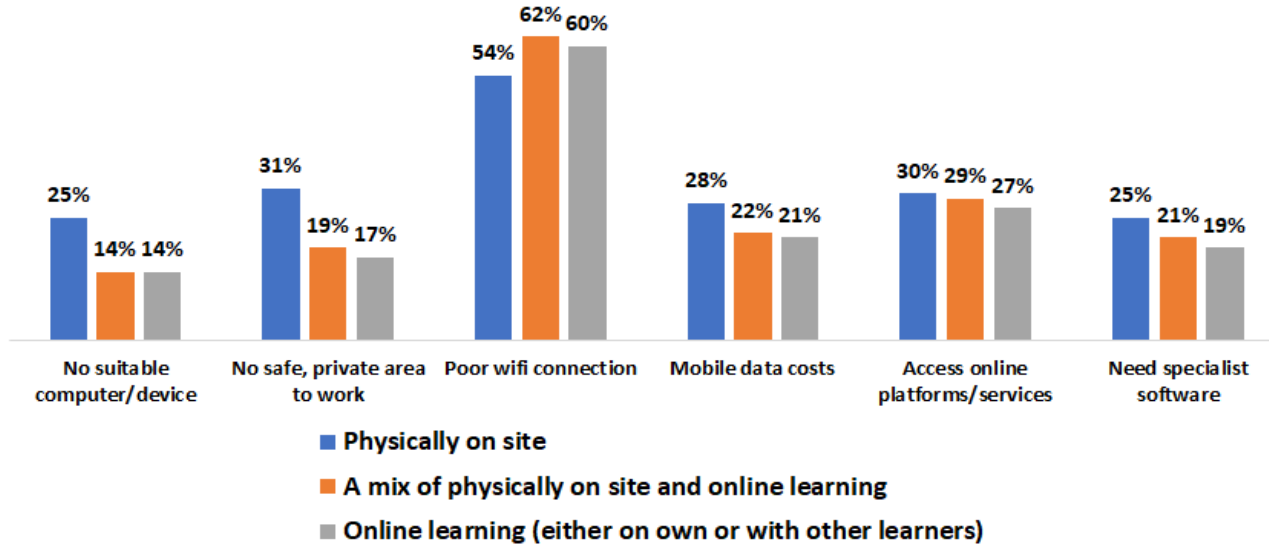
- **72%** – at home, own or family home
- **32%** – student accommodation
- **11%** – on campus in study spaces, libraries etc
- **3%** – off campus in public spaces (eg cafes)
- **1%** – I have not been learning online



# Theme one - When you've been learning online, have any of the following been a problem? - HE students



Q1 (In the last two weeks, how have you mainly been learning?) by (Q4) (When you've been learning online, have any of the following been a problem?) - HE students



## Theme two: digital platforms and services at your organisation

The percentages of HE students who agreed with various statements about their learning environment were:

- **48%** – reliable (38% neutral, 14% disagreed)
- **42%** – well designed (43% neutral, 16% disagreed)
- **45%** – easy to navigate (36% neutral, 19% disagreed)
- **70%** – safe and secure (27% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- **36%** of **HE students** agreed they were given the chance to be involved in decisions about online learning (36% neutral, 29% disagreed)



# Theme three: technology in your learning

Overall quality of online and digital learning :

- **HE students** were also positive about the quality of online and digital learning on their course overall. **68%** of all respondents and **71%** of new students rated it as being either 'best imaginable', 'excellent' or 'good'

The percentages of **HE students** who agreed with statements about the quality of **online learning materials** were:

- **55%** – **well designed** (35% neutral, 10% disagreed)
- **36%** – **engaging and motivating** (41% neutral, 23% disagreed)
- **45%** – **at the right level and pace** (38% neutral, 18% disagreed)



# Theme three: technology in your learning

**Range of learning activities** – percentage of **HE students** who said they had carried out the following online learning activities in the **last two weeks** prior to taking part in the survey were:



- **86%** – live lecture/teaching session
- **84%** – accessed recorded lecture/teaching session
- **81%** – accessed other course materials eg notes, assignments
- **64%** – submitted coursework
- **52%** – online discussion with lecturer
- **49%** – got feedback on their work
- **45%** – interacted with quizzes/games/tests
- **39%** – worked on a group project eg shared report
- **37%** – online research tasks
- **18%** – virtual lab, practical or field work

# Theme 4 – your digital skills

## Support and guidance

The percentages of **HE students** who agreed they had received support for learning online and digital skills development were:

- **52%** – support for learning online/away from campus (36% neutral, 12% disagreed)
- **42%** – guidance about the digital skills needed for their course (39% neutral, 18% disagreed)
- **25%** – an assessment of their digital skills and training needs (41% neutral, 34% disagreed)



# Theme 4 – your digital skills

## Where do HE students go for help with online learning?

- **67%** – other students on your course
- **61%** – lecturers/tutors
- **46%** – online videos and resources
- **33%** – friends and family
- **16%** – IT/e-learning staff
- **10%** – don't need help
- **7%** – library staff



## Qualitative themes

In their own words –what HE students are experiencing



# What HE students are telling us....

*"Online lectures aren't the same as on campus lectures, it's very difficult to stay engaged staring at a screen for 8 hours a day. The best lectures/tutorials are when they are well organised, to the point and cover everything in 45-60 minutes"*

*"Provide guidance on the best ways to engage with online learning and to be focused."*

*"We have over 200 students in a online lecture. Trying to teach 200 students in any environment is not going to be effective."*

*"Use bubble groups to teach in online as they are smaller and we have developed a relationship with those students instead of 100+ random students on a online lecture at a time"*

*"Create support networks and make online lectures more of a social experience with fluid three way communication during classes."*

# Positive aspects of online learning

## What HE students were saying...

- **Lecture recordings make a big difference to students in terms of:**
  - **Understanding** – ability to watch/revisit as many times as they would like
  - Being able to vary **pace** (slow down and speed up)
  - **Stop/pause** to facilitate and improve the quality of their **note-taking**
  - **Catch up** if unable to attend live session for any reason
  - Helpful to students for whom **English is not first language**
  - It can be easier to **hear** than in large lecture halls/theatres with less distraction surrounding sound

# Positive aspects of online learning

## What HE students are saying...

- **Live sessions are naturally more interactive and engaging than pre-records because they more easily allow opportunities to ask questions and receive timely responses**
- **Online learning is perceived as better by some students**
- The **flexibility** and **convenience** of online learning enables students to schedule their studies around their **other commitments** (work, family, care) in a less rigid way
- **Learning with and from peers is important to students** - small group activities work better than larger groups
- **Appreciation of effort that has gone into curriculum redesign, communication and support** - students acknowledge the **efforts** of both **academic** and **professional services staff** in **adapting** and **supporting** students in their online learning

# Negative aspects of online learning

## What HE students are saying...

- **Students are experiencing difficulties in accessing lectures and online resources**
- **Timeliness, scheduling and timetabling**
- **Online learning is hard and difficult** and can be **overwhelming** – students report receiving **too much work**, expectation of **larger volume of independent work than usual** but **without the benefit of timely support**
- **Difficult to concentrate/focus - too much screen time, some lectures too long, insufficient breaks**, intenseness of delivery mode – causes **fatigue** and **mental health concerns**
- **Communication is an issue - interactions** in live sessions can be difficult if **class size** is large, if **don't know other students**
- **Isolation and loneliness**

# What can we do now?

- **Get the basics right** –**wifi** (on/off campus), access to reliable **hardware** and **software**, clear **navigation** to learning content, **timetabling** and session **scheduling**, **audio** and **lighting** of online sessions
- Make learning sessions **more interactive** (eg quizzes, games, tests), **small group tasks** so students **feel connected** to each other, their course and their university
- **Record lessons** and make them available soon after delivery to aid personal learning preferences, revision and catch up
- **Train** and **support lecturers** to use online tools in a pedagogically sound and inclusive way
- Think about the **pace of delivery** (too fast/too slow) and consider **shorter** bursts and **regular** breaks
- Create opportunities to talk to/**ask questions** of lecturers and fellow students and give **timely individual and group support**
- Offer **timely feedback** on formative and summative assessment activities

# Next steps

## Data collection and analysis is continuing...

- Briefings summarising these findings together with full reports are available from <https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/reports-and-briefings/our-reports/>
- Gathered over 62,700 student responses when our surveys closed on the 30 April and is currently being analysed
- Get involved <https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/subscribe/find-out-more/> to run surveys with your students and staff
- Updates to [Jisc NUS roadmap for supporting students to improve their digital experience at university and college](#) for supporting students with learning online



# Questions and discussion

# Get in touch...

Digital experience insights

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<https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk>

#digitalstudent



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